

with coverage. And the percentage of Medicare beneficiaries without drug coverage who report not being able to afford a needed drug is about 5 times higher than those with coverage.

This "senior citizens' drug penalty," in my view, is unconscionable. Senior citizens are more reliant on drugs, and have higher drug costs, than any other segment of the population. They deserve to have the same bargaining power that benefits other Americans.

Mr. President, in April, the other side spoke against my budget amendment, claiming that there was already adequate language in the Republican budget resolution to ensure that we pass a prescription drug benefit this year. At the time, they pointed to the \$40 billion reserve fund which was included in the budget resolution that the Committee had reported, arguing that this would provide ample money to enact a prescription drug benefit and offer tax relief.

Republicans asked, in essence, that we trust them that the Senate won't put tax cuts before our nation's seniors. Let me say that I do trust my good friends on the other side of the aisle. But to borrow a line from Ronald Reagan, I believe we should trust—but verify. That requires deeds as well as words.

Mr. President, our nation's seniors deserve better than this. In April, at least fifty-one senators felt the same way. I urge every one of them, as well as senators who opposed my amendment then because they thought the \$40 billion reserve fund would guarantee a prescription drug benefit, to support my amendment now. With its passage, we'll be able to eliminate both the true "marriage penalty" and the "senior citizens' drug penalty."

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine is recognized.

Ms. COLLINS. I believe under the previous order I will be recognized to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized for 15 minutes.

CONCERN FOR SENATOR PAUL COVERDELL

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I want to express the sorrow that is in my heart, and I know in the hearts of all of my colleagues and, indeed, everybody who works in the Senate, about the sad news of the unexpected ill health of our friend and colleague, Senator PAUL COVERDELL of Georgia. My heart and my prayers go out to him, his family, his staff, his constituents, and all of the many people who care so much about our good friend. He will be in our hearts and in our prayers. I know I speak for all of my colleagues when I wish him a speedy recovery.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine is recognized.

(The remarks of Ms. COLLINS and Mr. CRAIG pertaining to the introduction of

S. 2879 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 3 p.m. having arrived, the Senate will now resume consideration of H.R. 4578, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4578) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, we are now back for the final 3 and one-quarter hours of debate on amendments to the Interior appropriations bill. Any Member who reserved an amendment to that bill may present it between now and 6:15 this evening, at which time, by unanimous consent, we go to the marriage penalty bill for what may be an extended series of votes. Any of the amendments reserved on the Interior bill will be voted on, if, in fact, the vote is necessary, tomorrow morning.

I list 12 amendments that were reserved for debate during this period of time. I am informed by staff that we have settled 4 of them. That leaves eight amendments: two by the Senator from New Mexico, Mr. BINGAMAN; one by the Senator from California, Mrs. BOXER; one by the Senator from Nevada, Mr. BRYAN; one by the Senator from Connecticut, Mr. LIEBERMAN; one by the Senator from Oklahoma, Mr. NICKLES; one by the Senator from Rhode Island, Mr. REED; one by the Senator from Wyoming, Mr. THOMAS.

Curiously enough, most of these Senators who have said they will be here from between 5 o'clock and 6 o'clock p.m., which takes a considerable portion of the debate time, are away. I think some of those eight amendments I have listed will themselves be settled without debate or by agreement. If any of the seven Senators whose names I have just mentioned are within hearing and sight of this debate, I urge that Senator to reach the Senate floor promptly. At this point they have a real opportunity to present their amendments. Later on, they are likely to be very constricted as to time.

Therefore, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. COLLINS). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THOMPSON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THOMPSON. Madam President, as we debate this bill to provide funding for the Department of the Interior in the next fiscal year, I would like to discuss an issue that is of increasing concern to me: our underinvestment in our national parks.

There are 379 national parks in the United States and U.S. territories, covering over 80 million acres. These parks provide Americans with an opportunity to enjoy activities such as hiking, camping, white water rafting, or horseback riding in some of the most beautiful sites in the world. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park in my home State of Tennessee is often referred to as the crown jewel of the national park system, and for good reason.

But one can't help but be concerned about what is happening in our parks today. I have seen first hand the problems associated with air pollution, traffic congestion, and invasive species in our parks. Folks come to the Smokies to escape the big city and breathe the clean mountain air. Unfortunately, there are too many days now when the air quality in the Smokies is worse than in major cities. Already this year, the park has recorded 13 days with unhealthy ozone levels. Who would believe that visiting a national park could be hazardous to your health?

Air pollution is also diminishing the experience of visitors in the park. People visit the Smokies for the magnificent mountain vistas. Unfortunately, the pollution reduces their visibility not only by affecting how far they can see from a scenic overlook, but also how well they can see. Ground level ozone washes out the bright colors of the leaves in the fall and the flowers in the spring. These air quality problems have landed the Great Smoky Mountains National Park on the list of 10 most endangered national parks compiled by the National Parks and Conservation Association.

Another major threat facing many of our national parks, including the Smokies, is damage from invasive species. Organisms that are not native to parks are finding their way in and are killing wildlife. Virtually all of the frasier firs on top of Klingman's Dome in the Smokies are dead. At first glance, it would appear that they were killed by fire, but that is not the case. These trees were killed by the balsam woolly adelgid which is not native to the Smokies and has no natural predator there.

These and similar problems afflict our entire national park system. That is why I'm pleased that the appropriations bill before us today recognizes these serious threats by providing \$11 million for the National Park Service's Natural Resource Challenge. This money will help fund air and water quality studies in our parks. It will also fund efforts to address the problems caused by non-native invasive